

## Newsletter

November 2025

MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre

Building Communities for Aging Better

*You are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed interest in news about the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre. We're excited to share what we've been up to over the last 6 months!*

The [MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre](#) is a unique partnership, established in 2021, between the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) and Dixon Hall, a multi-service agency focused on addressing poverty, social injustices and isolation across the lifespan, in Toronto's Downtown East. Our mission is to bring together Dixon Hall's strong community connections and MIRA's interdisciplinary research expertise to create lasting, evidence-based solutions that optimize the physical and social well-being of equity-deserving older adults.

### **A Message from the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Director and Dixon Hall's Chief Executive Officer**

Over the past six months, the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre has continued to grow as a hub of collaboration, learning, and community engagement in Toronto's downtown East. From our inspiring **Snacks and Science** series, which continues to draw large and enthusiastic audiences, to our first off-site event at the Oak Street Co-op, we have seen firsthand how curiosity, connection, and community can come together to support healthy aging. Our latest Snacks & Science event "Understanding Swallowing" saw more than 80 attendees gather to learn more about how swallowing works, what happens when it doesn't, and the importance of recognizing early warning signs. We hope you can join us for our next event on November 26<sup>th</sup> when we welcome back Dr. Anthony Levinson to speak about Anxiety and Depression.

Our **Community Advisory Group (CAG)** has once again been at the heart of our work, guiding our priorities, shaping our research, and co-designing programs like **Moving Together**, a new initiative that blends physical activity, education, and social connection. We were thrilled to welcome our CAG members at McMaster University for MacEngage in September, where they connected with researchers and students on campus, reminding

us how powerful partnerships can be when community voices and academic expertise meet.

We have expanded our team once again, with Brian Zheng joining us as a research assistant for the MacM3 study as well as being involved with various Centre activities such as Snacks & Science.

We are proud of the many milestones shared in this newsletter, each reflecting the dedication of our staff, volunteers, researchers, and community members. The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre stands as a testament to what is possible when we work together with compassion, curiosity, and commitment to create environments where everyone can thrive as they age.

The next six months will bring the launch of at least two new research projects – one will involve setting priorities for research on aging, from your perspective. Stay tuned for opportunities to get involved. Thank you for being a part of this journey!

**Marla Beauchamp**

Director, MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre

**Mina Mawani**

Chief Executive Officer, Dixon Hall

## MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Projects

**EMBOLDEN study**

The EMBOLDEN study ran two interventions in Downtown East Toronto – in St. Jamestown and in St. Lawrence neighborhoods. A total of 88 research participants were involved in these Toronto-based interventions. The research team concluded its data analysis and successfully held a report back event on findings, and next steps on advocacy, on November 20, 2025, at Dixon Hall.

**McMaster Monitoring My Mobility (MacM3) Study**

The MacM3 study achieved another milestone recently, with all participants now having completed their 16-month follow-up for the study. We recruited over 340 participants from Dixon Hall and 120 of them have completed the first two years of assessments. We are thrilled that most of those participants have agreed to do a third year! If you are a MacM3 participant, stay tuned for a MacM3 newsletter that will be sent out before the end of the year, highlighting the milestones for the study overall. Additionally, we plan to host a report back event in the spring to provide some study results to the participants.

### **HCP@Clinic**

The HCP@clinic research team and MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre staff used results from the needs assessment (conducted with building residents and staff), to design an HCP@clinic program for residents of 252 Sackville. This Clinic will focus on conducting health risk assessments and encouraging residents to connect to healthcare services and community programming. The Clinic will be led by a Research Nurse with support from an Assessor and two Peer Workers. The anticipated start date for the Clinic is late Winter 2025.

### **Dixon Hall Knowledge Synthesis Grant – Rooming House Project, Town Hall**



On May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, researchers from MIRA, including Dr. Joanna Sinn, led a Town Hall at Dixon Hall. The main intention for this Town Hall was to provide an update on the Dixon Hall Knowledge Synthesis Grant Rooming House Project, a project that has been active since June 2024.

Through interviews with rooming house staff and residents, a previous town hall, and a scan of published information related to rooming houses, the research team identified 10 key areas of focus for future work. During this town hall in May, a priority-setting exercise was conducted, where rooming house staff and residents voted for which of the 10 key areas they think are of highest priority. These community-identified priorities will guide future research projects related to housing.

### **Dixon Hall Knowledge Synthesis Grant – Digital Literacy Update**



On 17th June 2025, McMaster researchers Dr. Brian Detlor, Dr. Tara La Rose, and Irine Ghilic met with our Community Advisory Group (CAG) to present their findings from the August 2024 workshop on the topic of Digital Literacy Skills: Empowering Seniors in the Digital Age. The purpose of the original workshop was to gather feedback on participants' experience using digital technologies and the Tech Lounge. Brian and his team have published a working paper and recently hosted a Town Hall (knowledge sharing) event. The Digital Skills Training and Older Adults Townhall was a free, half-day gathering designed to bring together researchers, community organizations, older adults, industry leaders, and policy makers who share an interest in digital literacy for older adults. The event was hosted on November 3, 2025 at the McMaster University campus in Toronto (180 Bloor Street West). Through short talks, group discussions, and open conversation, participants explored findings from the new working paper, and heard insights from the community, researchers, and corporations. Lastly, as a group, participants shared ideas for future training programs and collaborations.

## Moving Together Planning Day



On July 3, 2025, the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre team began preparations for the long-awaited Moving Together program. The first step was to host a planning day with our four volunteers and co-developers of the program: Faye, Femmie, Milton, and Hilde.

Moving Together is a community-led initiative designed for residents of 585 King St. Participants can join weekly sessions over 12 weeks that include fitness activities, educational components, and a snack program. The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre team and the volunteers spent three hours together, sharing lunch and ideas. (Side note: Thai food for lunch might be our new favorite!) During the meeting, the research team presented their preliminary plans and received valuable feedback from the volunteers. For example, Faye, a long-time CAG member, emphasized the importance of offering safety tips to participants beforehand to help prevent injuries.

We're happy to report that the planning day was a success! We heard from all our volunteers and have already begun integrating their insights into the program's design.

## Setting Priorities for Research on Aging

We are beginning a new project with the goal of having the Dixon Hall community (clients and caregivers) identify their top 10 research priorities related to aging. This is an important step to make sure that our work is guided by the priorities and diverse needs of the community. Thank you to our Steering Group members who have signed up to work with us over the next year to guide this project! We will be holding focus groups with Dixon Hall clients and caregivers in the new year so that we can start to gather your perspectives on priorities related to aging.

# MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Updates

## Community Advisory Group

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) is a group of 11 older adults (and 2 Dixon Hall staff to support) advising the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre through a community perspective. They meet once a month and in the last 6 months have been busy with: Planning for the CAG trip to Hamilton (MacEngAge), gathering feedback/planning for smaller Snacks and Science events, suggesting improvements, and discussing potential Snacks & Science topics for 2026. The CAG also played a vital role in planning the upcoming research project, "Moving Together".

## MacEngAge – CAG Trip to McMaster



On September 19th, MIRA was thrilled to welcome the Community Advisory Group to McMaster University campus in Hamilton for a special event called MacEngAGE.

MacEngAGE is a day of intergenerational learning, exploration, and community connection. Guided by students and joined by researchers, the CAG members engaged with innovative research and technology, attended a thought-provoking talk by Dr. Shaun Saunderson on how we perceive and interact with technologies that support aging well, and had lunch at the Phoenix, McMaster's campus pub. Employees from MIRA and Dixon Hall were also in attendance, giving us a valuable opportunity to continue our conversations and collaborations.

We at the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre are so grateful for all the passion, hard work, and support of our Community Advisory Group. The members not only co-lead research initiatives with us but also provide us with valuable guidance and direction of our work at the Centre. It is always a pleasure to work with our members; Angela, Cynthia, Eileen, Marien, Stacey, Faye, Hilde, Angelina, Tracy, Femmie, and Sharon.

### **Research Contacts Database**

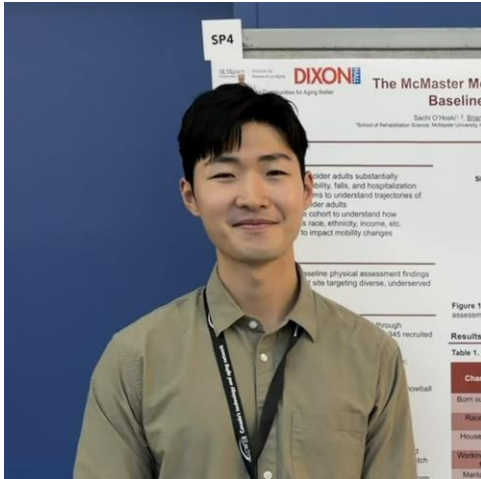
The MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre is creating a list of individuals who may be interested in participating in future research studies, either at Dixon Hall or in collaboration with McMaster University. By giving your consent, you agree to be contacted by a Dixon Hall or MIRA staff member to see if you'd like to take part in a research study. Joining the list does not mean you're automatically enrolled in any study. You'll simply be contacted if an opportunity arises, and you're always free to say no.

Your personal information will remain confidential and will not be shared outside of McMaster or Dixon Hall. There is no cost or payment involved, and being on the list won't impact any services you currently receive. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can ask to be removed from the list at any time. Even if you decide to opt out later, your information will continue to be handled with full confidentiality.

If you are interested in joining this list, please [click here](#) to fill out the form or use this link:

<https://macreal.mcmaster.ca/surveys/?s=NPWRR9XDPWTF9K3J>

### **Staff Update – Brian**



My name is Brian Zheng, and I recently completed my Master's degree in Biomechanics at McMaster University, where I studied the effects of mental fatigue on the way we move. Since joining the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre team and connecting with members of the community, I've discovered a true passion for working with older adults. This experience has inspired me to continue my studies to better support healthy aging. In my spare time, I love playing badminton and trying new restaurants. I'm excited to continue learning and collaborating with this team.

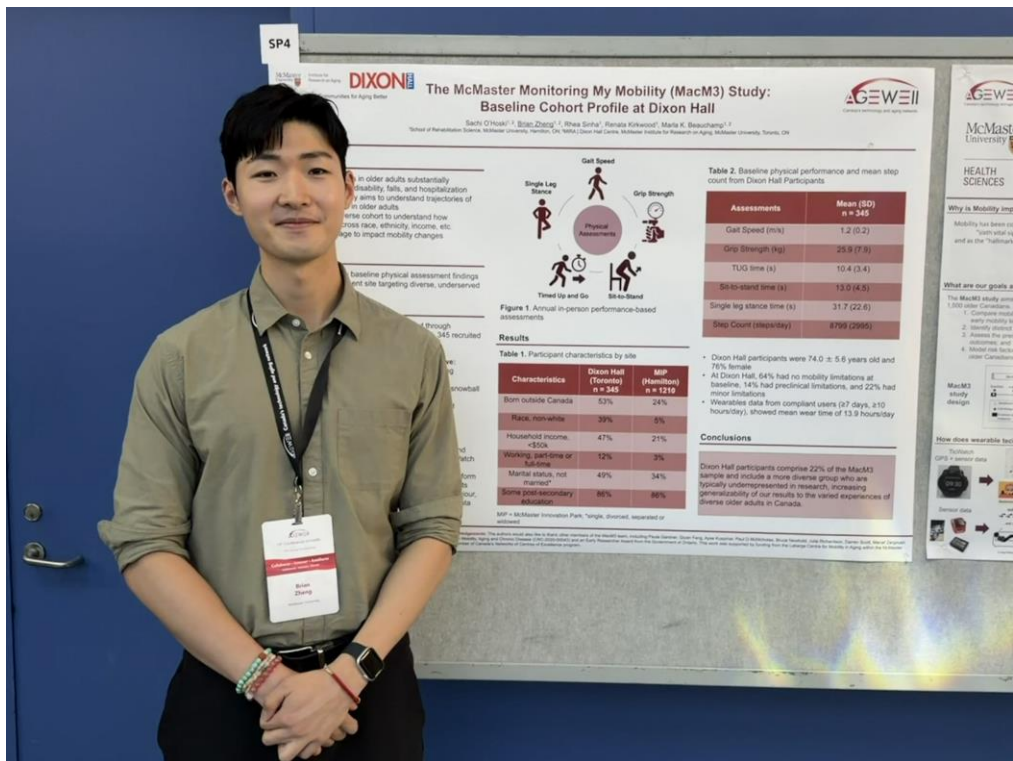
### Say Hello to Our New Sign!



We are excited to share that the Centre has a new sign out in-front of 192 Carlton St. This is a symbol of the growth we have achieved together as a community. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported, guided, and co-led research projects with our research team. We can't wait to share more events, research, and opportunities with this community.

# Poster Presentations

We recently shared our work at two major national conferences in Montréal. Brian presented about the MacM3 study at the AGE-WELL Conference and Gésine presented about Snacks & Science at the Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG) Conference. Their presence at these national gatherings helped shine a spotlight on the meaningful work taking place at the Centre and highlighted our unique community-based approach to research on aging.



Brian Zheng, Research Assistant at the MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre, presenting the **MacM3** study at the **AGE-WELL** Conference in Montreal.



Gésine Alders and the MIRA team had the opportunity to attend and present about **Snacks and Science** at the **Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG) Conference** in Montreal.

## MIRA | Dixon Hall Centre Events

### Seniors' Forum



The Seniors Forum is an annual celebration of seniors in the St Jamestown neighborhood. On June 19, 2025, the community gathered to enjoy performances by local senior groups

and listen to presentations on bird watching and seniors' benefits. There was also a special presentation by Sama Jaber, MIRA Trainee, and PhD student at McMaster University.

Sama's talk, "Bright Minds at Every Age: Boosting Brain Health Naturally," shared insights from her MIRA-supported research focused on promoting cognitive well-being across the lifespan.

## **Snacks & Science**

Snacks & Science events are engaging learning and discussion sessions for the community, led by experts from the McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA). Each session focuses on a different aging-related topic, chosen based on community interests and needs.

These events create a welcoming space for community members (older adults, caregivers, service providers and staff) to learn, connect, and engage with research and each other. The events begin with snacks and mingling, followed by a presentation from a McMaster researcher. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions that support a deeper understanding of how to age well.

## **Women and Stroke**



On May 28th, 2025, the Snacks & Science series continued with an engaging event led by Dr. Ada Tang and Dr. Kevin Moncion, focusing on the important topic of Women and

Stroke. The event was attended by over 70 guests, including Dixon Hall clients and staff, service providers, caregivers, and future Snacks & Science speakers.

The event began with a community building exercise led by MIRA's Research Manager, Audrey Patocs, and Research Assistant Tajwar Arnab. Audrey and Tajwar engaged with attendees, asking them questions such as, "What advice would you give to the younger generation?" and "What programming could Dixon Hall add to help seniors?". Snacks & Science events are more than just opportunities to share information; they're a meaningful way to engage with the community and strengthen connections among participants.

Ada and Kevin presented information about how stroke affects women differently, how to identify early symptoms and how to recover from it. The presentation was followed by Q&A, coffee, snacks, and mingling, allowing attendees to connect with the researchers in an informal setting and to ask questions that relate to them personally.

View the Women and Stroke webinar recording [here](#).

Or <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/videos/2025/06/18/women-and-stroke--risk--recovery--and-prevention>

### **Fall Prevention at Oak St. Housing Co-operative**



On July 23, 2025, Dr. Sachi O'Hoski and Dr. Stephanie Saunders traveled to the nearby Oak St. Housing Co-operative to do a special presentation from the Snacks & Science series. This was our first off-site Snacks & Science presentation. Over 25 residents and staff attended and were eager to learn more about the issue. After the presentation, attendees had an opportunity to mingle with the presenters and each other, asking specific questions about their unique situations, while enjoying delicious and healthy snacks.

## Understanding Swallowing: How it works and what happens when it doesn't



On September 29th, more than 80 community members gathered for the latest installment of Snacks & Science, “Understanding Swallowing: How it works and what happens when it doesn’t”. Presenters Dr. Ashwini Namasivayam-MacDonald and Paige DiStefano guided the audience through an exploration of dysphagia, a swallowing disorder that can impact health, safety, and quality of life. They presented the mechanics of swallowing, common symptoms, complications that can arise, and strategies that caregivers and families can use to provide support.

Following the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to ask some of their most pressing questions, share experiences, and view demonstrations of safe swallowing.

Snacks & Science continues to serve as a space where older adults and researchers can engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange knowledge, and work collaboratively to improve health and well-being across the lifespan.

We would like to thank all attendees and our presenters for another successful Snacks & Science event!

Next Event - Understanding Anxiety and Depression, Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

# SNACKS & SCIENCE

November 26, 2025 | 3:00 - 5:00 PM  
Dixon Hall Parish Hall



## Understanding Anxiety and Depression in Older Adults

with Dr. Anthony Levinson



Institute for Research on Aging



Join Dr. Anthony Levinson for a presentation on understanding depression and anxiety in older adults. The event will be on **November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 3PM – 5PM** at Parish Hall (188 Carlton Street)

Topics covered will include:

- Learning how to recognize the symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Understanding what causes them
- Exploring proven approaches to feeling better

This session will offer insight, current evidence around different treatments, and helpful resources — including free online programs at [UnderstandingAnxiety.ca](https://www.understandinganxiety.ca) and [UnderstandingDepression.ca](https://www.understandingdepression.ca).

A question-and-answer period and open discussion will follow! Click here to register: <https://tinyurl.com/28c62h4f>, or contact Tajwar Arnab at [miradh@mcmaster.ca](mailto:miradh@mcmaster.ca) or 647-598-2119.

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